



FEELING HOT, HOT, HOT: Sunshine at the sea front in Holywood, Co Down

PICTURE: Mal McCann

You tan if you want to – the scorching sun is not for me

PHEW! Scorchio! I have no clothes for this kind of weather. We 'gingers' hate it.

Despite the liberal application of all kinds of protective unguents, we do not tan. We blister. We burn. Ten minutes exposure to anything over 16°C and we come indoors with a red raw angry triangle tattooed on our chest and a throbbing headache.

Also, you can nearly hear the sun siphoning the colour out of our expensively tinted hair. What misery for us reared-under-a-jamjar palefaces. Our natural colour is ghostly white with a tinge of green, described by classicists and the more charitable, as 'alabaster' – a complexion much desired and admired in an earlier era, but not, alas in this one. The legacy of such exposure is a rash of freckles – charming in small children, but as attractive in adults as age-spots or acne.

It's considered criminal now to allow children out without skin protection. No such sanction in my day. I had to be daubed with calamine lotion after the damage was done. At self-conscious 14 I took matters into my own hands and attempted to bleach my freckles away using neat lemon juice. I wouldn't recommend it.

I was fascinated as a child by elderly men up the country, their faces weatherbeaten to a walnut hue. When they took their caps off, their bald heads shone, bone-white and smooth as eggshells, as did their arms above the elbow. Once, to have a tan, made one instantly identifiable as irredeemably working class.

Tanning only became fashionable in the 1930s when Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor and Coco Chanel kicked over the social traces and the 'quality' flocked to roast themselves on

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the Mediterranean riviera and acquire the same finish as their smartly varnished yachts. Prior to that, it had all been picture-hats and parasols to preserve a porcelain complexion and sea-bathing an uncomfortable exercise undertaken for the benefit of one's health, indulged in wearing neck-to-ankle wool. Now people are flying abroad, not to explore the history, culture and lifestyle of a foreign country and its citizens, but to hurl themselves into significantly warmer waters wearing post-it sized scraps of fabric secured by parcel twine, then flinging themselves onto the barbeque heat of a beach to kipper themselves completely – probably in the company of their fellow countrymen in a resort whose every facility is specifically

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designed to make them feel at home. Well, if that's what floats their boat and their highest priority is an enviable tan, happy days.

Hot weather dressing is a problem in our climate where the days we have it can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Synthetic fabrics are sweatily adherent, cottons and linens coolly comfortable, so long as you don't sit down, when they garner as many creases as a melodeon and you look as if you've slept in them. As for male shorts – something sad happens to men's legs after fifty and the contrast between ruddy faces and pipecleaner-pale lower limbs looks incongruous.

Apropos of nothing, why are both sexes suddenly wearing big, clotted, blinding-white trainers? I thought at first it was just a bad-taste aberration, until I saw celebrities wear them with evening clothes at an awards ceremony. And, Lord save us, a bride! She'll regret that. Whatever happened to appropriateness and good taste?

I fail to understand the rapture that greeted the recent announcement that alfresco dining was permitted. Never a fan of picnics or barbeques, eating 'OUT' out' at a proper table on a proper chair, even if your dinner's cooling more rapidly than you can eat it, while battling away flying insects and noticing threads of rain in the breeze that carries away your paper napkin? No thank you.

Our brief heatwave may be over by the time you read this. You lie out and rotisserie yourself if you wish. I'll be relaxing indoors in a floor-length kaftan, a wide-brimmed hat and large dark glasses, with the windows open but the blinds half-shut. If, by the age of 50, you want a complexion like an old leather handbag, it's no skin off my nose.

ON THIS DAY

JULY 20 1921

London Conference

THE Press Association says that very hopeful feeling continues to prevail regarding the present conference on Ireland. The progress made so far has been as much as was expected and that nothing in the nature of a hitch in the proceedings has occurred. The stage has not been reached as yet when the representatives of the Irish parties can be brought together but there is reason to believe this may be effected early next week.

Punctually at half past eleven yesterday morning Mr de Valera, accompanied by Mr R C Barton and Mr Art O'Brien (secretary of the Self-Determination League) arrived at 10 Downing Street in an open car. The conversations were again in private, Mr de Valera and the Premier, Mr Lloyd George being in the Cabinet Room by themselves.

Families Expelled by Mobs

REFUGEES from Cupar Street, Norfolk Street, Louisa Street, Conway Street and other centres had some heart-rending stories to relate to an Irish News representative of agonising experiences on Sunday morning when these areas were invaded. They and their family were forced to escape by the backs of their houses.

In view of what these unfortunate people, whose only offence in the eyes of their oppressors is that they belong to the Catholic faith, have gone through, it is remarkable to find amongst them a high spirit of optimism when they are, without any definite prospects for the future.

In Milford St. National School there are housed over sixty persons. They were warned to leave their homes when an organised crowd made a raid at 4.30 on Sunday morning.

A house in Cupar Street was the first objective of the gang which included as many females as males. The occupants were a woman and her young family – the wife and children of an expelled worker forced to go to America during the pogrom to earn a living for them. There were also living in the house the woman's sister, children and another sister, an invalid whose house was wrecked on 1st July. Without getting time to carry away any of their property, the unhappy people were compelled to flee by the backs of their houses while the Orange gang proceeded to smash in their doors.

AT THESE 'exploratory' talks in London, Lloyd George outlined the British government's offer to de Valera: dominion status for the south, coupled with the continued existence of a separate Northern Ireland. De Valera described the offer of Canadian-style status as 'illusory' and rejected partition. Meanwhile Belfast Catholic families burned out of their homes by loyalist mobs following the truce found refuge in local schools and church halls.

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